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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA PICKS UP MOMENTUM ON TIP ISSUES

REF: BRATISLAVA 298

1. (SBU) Summary. The Slovak government recently completed a needs assessment analyzing current trafficking activities and invited poloffs to discuss the findings. In a May 5 meeting, Jana Kviecinska, the Director General of the Human Rights and Minorities Section at the Office of the Government, informed us that the GOS will take immediate steps to build relevant anti-trafficking institutions. Interior Minister Vladimir Palko and Deputy Prime Minister Pal Csaky recently agreed to intensify activity in this area. The planned resolution will name a national coordinator under the Ministry of Interior, propose increasing the number of police officers working on TIP, and appropriate additional funds to the fight against trafficking, with an emphasis on victim services. End Summary.

Momentum to Combat TIP Increases

2. (SBU) When Slovakia created an expert working group on trafficking in persons at the end of March (see reftel), momentum to implement new mechanisms to fight trafficking increased. On May 5, Jana Kviecinska, Director General of the Human Rights and Minorities Section at the Office of the Government shared with poloffs recent findings from a nation-wide needs assessment and future steps. In preparing this report, the government surveyed several NGOs and police officers, and referenced several countries' best practices. The report concluded that several immediate steps could be taken in order to strengthen existing anti-trafficking activities. The briefing and recommendations have been approved both by Interior Minister Vladimir Palko and Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights Pal Csaky.

Immediate Solutions Proposed

3. (SBU) The needs assessment with proposed recommendations will be submitted to an upcoming government coalition meeting for further discussion. The Human Rights section proposed appointing a National Coordinator for Trafficking issues within the Ministry of the Interior, from where the government's efforts -- including coordination with the NGO community -- will be strengthened. Kviecinska noted that placing the position within the Ministry of the Interior, as opposed to making it a Plenipotentiary position responsible directly to the Prime Minister, was pragmatic because it would ensure effective coordination, including the national and border forces.

Long-Term Vision

4. (SBU) The report proposed some long-term solutions, such as an increase in the number of trained police officers in the regions of Slovakia most in need, such as Lucenec and Michalovce in the Southeast. Kviecinska also mentioned an increased role for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by earmarking funds for the repatriation of Slovak trafficking victims and giving grants to NGOs offering reintegration. The working group will incorporate a number of these ideas into a national action plan, which should be prepared by year's end.

5. (SBU) While Kviecinska's office will "get the ball rolling" by providing recommendations at an upcoming GOS cabinet meeting, the Ministry of the Interior will create the long-term strategy. Kviecinska hoped that, in conjunction with the small NGO community working on the trafficking problem, Slovakia could increase training for government and immigration officials in repatriation and assistance to identified victims. She said that she had been surprised to learn that the border police are already quite supportive of their NGO partners, and that they have even begun to allow NGO representatives to participate and observe investigations in some instances.

Future Cooperation

6. (SBU) Kviecinska stressed that USG support in identifying

conferences, training, and other avenues through which experience could be gained abroad both at the professional level as well as the Ministerial level would be greatly appreciated. Invitations for high-ranking officials to present Slovakia's activities and achievements in counter-trafficking would be extremely welcome.

Comment

17. (SBU) During the meeting, Kviecinska repeatedly referred to the new National Coordinator as "she," an apparent tip of the hat to her preferred candidate and apparent odds-on favorite for the job, Anna Babincova, the head of the police's anti-trafficking unit. According to Kviecinska, Babincova is pleased that the issue with which she has been so active is finally getting significant financial resources and high-level support. Kviecinska hopes that Babincova's elevation to the new position will give her the access needed to continue the government's newly-found momentum on this issue.

18. (SBU) Not all of these ideas are new, and the recent needs assessment included several recommendations from a 2002 proposal Slovakia submitted to the United Nation's Office for Drugs and Crime Prevention. That proposal is still waiting for funding. Nonetheless, the meeting assured poloffs that the government is committed to moving forward with strengthening anti-trafficking activities with domestic funds in the absence of the promised international assistance.

THAYER

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